1972

The theme of "Love and Seperateness" in Eudora Welty's Delta Wedding

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THE THEME OF "LOVE AND SEPARATENESS"
IN EUDORA WELTY'S DELTA WEDDING
by Ronnee Tinny Moyer

Abstract

The theme of "Love and Separateness" has been examined by various critics in the short stories of Eudora Welty. Its extension to Delta Wedding, however, has never been fully explored. In this novel Miss Welty examines the question of how one maintains a separate identity despite the constant demands of a selfish family love.

George Fairchild, the family favorite, stands at the heart of the Fairchilds, smothered by the affection of his relatives. In return, they expect him to cater to their needs and desires until there is no place for his personal ambitions in life. The conflict arises because he does not want to be a family idol as his brother Denis had been; George desires to be only a man, free to experience life to the fullest. This goal in life involves an element of danger in facing reality head-on, and he is ready to take the risk.

His philosophy of life is extremely different from the general family practice, which is to avoid the intrusion of reality into their lives at all costs. The Fairchilds prefer romantic fantasies that deny people the right to be seen as they really are and to seek their own

destinies.

During the course of the novel George does succeed in his quest for love and separateness. His philosophy, seen symbolically in his stand on the railroad trestle, also serves as a challenge to demand self-determination that is taken up by some other members of the family.

Critics, often fault the novel for its failure to offer a valid statement on life. Unfortunately, by failing to recognize Miss Welty's centrol theme of "Love and Separateness," these scholars have not understood the truths examined in the novel. By using the extreme case of the Fairchilds, Miss Welty examines the age-old problem of protective family love and the need for personal experience despite the possible dangers involved. She strongly states that one needs separateness to experience life and become a fulfilled person. Failure to achieve this separateness may result in the smothering, destructive love portrayed by the Fairchilds until George brings new life to the family by asserting his independence.

THE THEME OF "LOVE AND SEPARATENESS" IN EUDORA WELTY'S DELTA WEDDING

by

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A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

English

Lehigh University

1972

This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

January 6, 1972
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Table of Contents

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Introduction

When Delta Wedding by Eudora Wedding appeared in 1945, it was considered to be of sufficient literary importance to be serialized in the Atlantic Monthly (January to April, 1946). The magazine introduction to the novel read, "It is by odds [sic] the best thing she's written,"[1] heralding Miss Welty's arrival as a novelist as well as a short-story writer.

Isaac Rosenfeld, reviewing the novel in The New Republic, was not so enthusiastic, however, admitting that he was so bored by the novel that he managed to struggle through only the first one hundred pages. Adding that the main problem in his mind was that the Fairchilds did not come to life, he recommended that Miss Welty return to her short stories.[2] Diana Trilling also liked the author better as a short-story writer, since she found the style of Delta Wedding to be too affected to present an honest picture of the New South.[3]

Of these early reviewers only John Crowe Ransom enthusiastically praised the novel and the writing mastery that created a family such as the Fairchilds. He tempered this praise, however, with a conclusion that showed reservations about the pertinence of this novel to the South in general.[4]

Despite these few reservations, the critics agreed that

Eudora Welty had added another medium to her art. Although still a prolific producer of short stories, she managed to write a novel so rich in character, mood, and setting that Delta Wedding became the subject of numerous literary studies.

One of the most important aspects of the novel, according to these articles, was the mood Miss Welty managed to create in the Mississippi Delta. Alan Jones, in "The World of Love: the Fiction of Eudora Welty," characterized it as a "Tennysonian ability to sustain an atmospheric mood."[5] Louis Rubin, however, found her style to be more thoroughly feminine than Tennysonian:

> The most startling quality of Eudora Welty's art is her style: shimmering, hovering, elusive, fanciful, fastening on little things. Entirely feminine, it moves lightly, capriciously, mirroring the bemused, diverted quality of the people whom it describes.[6]

It is interesting that Mr. Rubin's adjectives describing Miss Welty's style repeat many of the words used by the author herself to relate the mood of the Delta.

The amount of mood in this novel also brought the question of organization to the critical mind. Was there too much atmosphere that would cloud the pertinent issues of the plot? In 1965 the Atlantic Monthly presented Miss Welty's own opinion on this subject: "The novelist's work is highly organized, but I should say it is organized

around anything but logic."[7] Chronological order that may be difficult to recognize in the novel's atmosphere is therefore not really necessary for organization. Indeed, a person's mind does not operate by the clock or even in complete thoughts. Because much of the information offered to the reader by Miss Welty is gleaned through the private thoughts of the characters, logical order becomes not only unnecessary but an unnatural mental process.

While Miss Welty gave the author's point of view on organization, John Hardy saw this aspect as a critic and said that in Delta Wedding her unorthodox order is highly successful. Calling the novel her most "rigidly restricted, disciplined"[8] work, he suggested that the organization of the piece becomes evident when the book is read as a poem filled with recurring themes, symbols, and metaphors.[9]

Whether read in this way or as an engrossing novel, Delta Wedding has been established as a major work in modern Southern literature by the number of studies done on it. Unfortunately, these works face into only a few general categories. There are surface studies such as the early reviews mentioned above. Examinations of the author's style reveal the consensus that Miss Welty has created an unusual unity in the novel through her strong handling of atmosphere and mood. That the Fairchilds are a unique and engrossing family has also been established

by literary scholars. Unfortunately, with the exception of Ruth Vande Kieft and John Hardy, little has been done to adequately examine the individual members of this family. The sparsity of articles on this subject leaves an open challenge to students of literature to trace the performances of the characters in what John Crowe Ransom categorizes as a "comedy of love."[10]

> He could understand God's giving Separateness first and then giving Love to follow and heal in its wonder; but God had reversed this, and given Love first and then Separateness, as though it did not matter to him which came first.[11]

The novel Delta Wedding by Eudora Welty presents a wealth of themes and motifs to its reader, but central in importance is the story of the Fairchilds and their struggle with Love and Separateness. Born into a family that thrives on the love of blood-tie relationships, the Fairchilds assert their Separateness throughout Delta Wedding.

The term "Love and Separateness" is not new in Miss Welty's writing. Robert Penn Warren has traced its effect in many of her short stories.[12] To realize its impact in Delta Wedding, however, one must first examine carefully the Fairchilds of the Mississippi Delta and their almost smothering love that seeks to deny man's right to individuality.

The Fairchilds are a plantation family of moderate wealth. Living in the rural area surrounding the small village that bears their name, they seem to comprise the entire social structure of the area. Everyone who is important becomes so because of his relationship to or

association with the Fairchilds. The family name is a label of prestige whether worn by a Negro, a house, or a relative. If one is a Fairchild, he has the right to enter the charmed circle of life at Shellmound, the main plantation.

As the novel begins, the family is preparing for the wedding of Dabney, the second daughter, to Troy Flavin, the plantation overseer. Although it is not a popular match, the Fairchilds rally and are seen at a shimmering pitch of excitement as relatives arrive, food is prepared, and wedding finery is not delivered.

The initial view of the actual family is through the eyes of Laura McRaven, a nine-year-old cousin who arrives for the wedding shortly after the death of her mother, Annie Laurie Fairchild. As the girl's train pulls into the station, she notices what seems to be the special rhythm of the Fairchild family. Cousins are jumping, swaying, waving.[13] It is as if the whole family is in perpetual motion, a motion into which Laura enters when she reaches Shellmound. Accompanied by the background sound of the compress, she rocks on the joggle board with her cousins, seeming to unconsciously lull herself into membership with the Fairchilds, a sacred right that is hers from birth.

This birthright of a Fairchild is not to be taken

lightly. Although seldom openly flaunted, it is a fact that one can never become a Fairchild. Even Ellen, Battle's wife, who is pregnant with her tenth baby, remains slightly outside the charmed circle. Ellen's position proves to be an advantageous one, however, for it is through her eyes that the reader sees most of the critical points of the novel. She is a necessary interpreter of Delta life because the Fairchilds themselves are usually too wrapped up in their personal mystique to see life realistically.

This mystique is made primarily of happiness and love. Miss Welty writes, "Passionate, sensitive to the point of strain and secrecy, their legend was happiness. 'The Fairchilds are the happiest people.' They themselves repeated it to each other" (258). Ironically, it is a sort of desperate happiness they practice, as if they have constantly to reassert the joy of their existence. John Crowe Ransom, in "Delta Fiction," notes that the Fairchilds do not simply accept happiness, but consciously stop and examine it. They express joy not only at good events (such as the birth of Aunt Tempe's grandson), but even at faults and shortcomings — as long as they are Fairchild faults and shortcomings.[14]

When problems arise from outside the family, however, the Fairchilds react differently. Shock at the audacity

of the outsider to even attempt to upset the general tranquillity is an initial reaction. This is seen when the family learns that Robbie Reid has left her husband George and wonders at her nerve. It becomes an insult not merely to the husband, but to the Fairchilds as well.

After the initial reaction of shock, the family defense mechanism takes over to protect their happy state. They simply close their minds to the problem as if it did not exist. Instead, they bake a cake, visit a relative, or merely think of something else. Ellen notices this practice when she thinks," ... Fairchilds simply shied away from trouble as children would do" (187). By turning their backs on the outside world, they gain strength and reassurance from each other, as if, although separate people, they have another existence which is the state of being a Fairchild.

Alfred Appel, Jr., in "The Season of Dreams and the Natchez Trace," pauses in his examination of the mood of the novel to note that "Plain little Robbie understands that the 'spectacle' of Fairchild love is a kind of collective narcissism."[15] She expresses this when she says, "'You're just loving yourselves in each other — yourselves over and over again'" (194). Somehow by kissing or caressing each other, the Fairchilds revive themselves through the security of their love.

The Power of "Place"

The intense need of family identity brings the question of insecurity to mind. It is possible that the desire to reaffirm love is an extension of Eudora Welty's emphasis on "Place" in fiction. Peace is not merely a locale, but a sense of belonging and family ties, of security on which to firmly build a life. Miss Welty says, "It is through Place that we put down roots, wherever and whenever birth, chance, or our travelling selves may set us down, but where these roots reach toward is the deep and running vein of human understanding."[16] While in her essay the author emphasizes the importance of Place for the writer, it can be extended to the characters in a novel as well.

John E. Hardy, in "Delta Wedding as Region and Symbol," discusses the special quality of Place. By observing Laura McRaven's reaction to the Mississippi Delta he indicates that she becomes an adventurer entering an "enchanted forest."[17] A rereading of the first pages of Delta Wedding supports this view that the sense of the land is so strong that it becomes almost a character in itself.

The approach to the Delta begins with "... what an arriver in a land feels — that slow hard pounding in the breast" (13). This pounding continues as again the special

rhythm is felt: "The land was perfectly flat and level, but it shimmered like the wing of a lighted dragonfly. It seemed strummed, as though it were an instrument and something had touched it" (12). This meter is again reflected in the family rhythm of the jumping cousins, the ringing telephone, and the chanting children like the giant heartbeat of Shellmound which these people need to maintain their security against the outside world.

In "Rhetoric and Southern Landscapes," however, Thomas Carter takes an extreme view of this power of the land when he says," ...the place is far more real than anything that occurs, or the shadowy people to whom it occurs; it usually usurps, one feels continually, the vitality that ought to belong to the characters — who appear to have no inner, or even mental, life whatsoever."[18] Although the power of the land must be acknowledged and its influence on the Fairchilds affirmed, Mr. Carter's opinion of ineffectual character vitality is too strong. Delta Wedding is the story of people whose vital love is so strong it nearly cripples the very ones it cherishes. Such an emotion is scarcely possible in weak people. Indeed, the main characters are so wrapped up in their "inner or mental lives" that they see the bustle of Dabney's wedding through a haze of vagueness. Ellen is constantly worried about Dabney's future happiness, which somehow seems to depend on George solving his marital

problems. Shelley, the oldest daughter, expresses the fears and longings she feels in facing her first tour in the outside world. Laura, the motherless child, strives to fully belong at Shellmound and to prove her love to Uncle George. George himself worries about his estranged wife as he seeks to maintain his identity in the world of crushing Fairchild love. Surely these primary examples indicate that while Mr. Carter has recognized the power of the land, he has misplaced the proportion of its strength.

The real importance of Place is not in its ability to dominate the inhabitants, as Mr. Carter suggests, but to give them a sense of security and reassurance on which they can build their lives. Eudora Welty finds this to be true not only in fictional experience, but in her own life as well. She says, "Like a good many other writers, I am myself touched off by Place."[19] Place becomes a starting point and when one is sure of his footing, he can then turn his attention to his life and its problems.

It is also necessary to differentiate between the Fairchilds' need for Place at Shellmound and their needs in the outside world. While in the safety of the Delta, the family does not consciously need the reassurance of love and understanding through Place. It is only when threatened by the dangers that constitute the outside world that the Fairchilds turn inward to revitalize themselves

through family reassurance. In the novel the family is threatened by the invasion of outsiders Robbie Reid and Troy Flavin. It is threatened by the Yellow Dog, the train from Memphis, which nearly kills George and Maureen on the trestle. Generally it senses the danger of the whole outside world of reality waiting for entrance at the edge of the Delta. Because of these things, the reader sees the family in a state of uncertainty and need. Drawn together by the overt occasion of the wedding itself, the Fairchilds really have an inner need to regroup and restate their family legend of love and happiness. By returning to the Fairchild birthplace of Shellmound, they seek to accomplish this in each other and in the land. Once they are strengthened and the crisis is past, they can turn again to the matter of living their individual lives.

The Fairchild Legend

The unity of the Fairchilds, or so-called "family legend," is a term that is often mentioned by reviewers and critics of Delta Wedding. With the exception of John Hardy in "Delta Wedding as Region and Symbol" the problem of defining the legend rather than simply stating its existence is generally ignored.

Eudora Welty states in the text that the family legend is "happiness" (258). But is it really so simple? When dealing with any family, even one with a great sense of kinship like the Fairchilds, can every member have a single view of a thing such as happiness? Except for Ellen, who is not a born Fairchild, no one really stops to notice the almost pathetic need for mother-love that Laura feels, the uneasy discontent of Shelley, who can only pour her true thoughts out to a diary, or that Aunt Shannon is out of her mind. Ironically for a family that values love so much, the Fairchilds are so busy seeking happiness as a unit that they don't stop to see the individual needs of their loved ones.

Ruth Vande Kieft considers this almost paradoxical love in her Twayne study of Eudora Welty. Stating that "Despite all their family warmth and shared activity, the

Fairchilds are intensely private identities. Their significent thoughts and feelings seldom break into words, their perceptions are intuitive, their 'analysis' is internal,"[20] she turns to a symbolic vein and suggests that this situation is reflected in the name of the plantation, "Shellmound," with each family member wrapped in his own shell of privacy.[21] Accepting this interpretation, one must return again to the legend of happiness. Can the Fairchilds truly seek happiness while unaware that individual members are unhappy?

The answer to this lies in what is a basic "failure" in Fairchild point of view. Generally unwilling to face reality, they turn to each other in times of strife. In a simple example of family conceit, they feel that Fairchild love is all anyone needs or should desire. They see each other blinded by the love in their eyes, saying in essence, "We love you. That's all you need. Don't worry about anything." Strangely enough, while they repeat this fallacy, they actually believe it to be true. Robbie Reid screams out in exasperation against this idea when she insists that Fairchild love is not enough for George's happiness. In fact, she pledges herself to protect him from what she views as their malignant love. The family, with the exception of Ellen, who is still an outsider, blithely ignores her fears, and dismisses the whole problem to go on with the

wedding. Robbie has returned, and to them it does not matter if she is still hurt; the family's only concern is George's feelings. At least the external happiness of the Fairchilds is restored.

John Hardy explains the family legend of happiness by placing the Fairchild consciousness on two levels. In the only in-depth examination of the Fairchild legend available, he agrees with Ruth Vande Kieft by saying that "They don't communicate much of themselves to one another, however much they are in a sense involved with one another and mutually dependent."[22] By using a two-level theory, he agrees to a general Fairchild legend of happiness, but maintains that the main legend is a second level of inscrutable separateness in unity. That is, while each member operates as a Fairchild, he also has a deeper private identity that not even the family may see. It is this deeper level that the Fairchilds ignore as an almost unconscious agreement to abide by the "legend."[23]

This interesting interpretation can be supported by the novel. The main family characters, George, Dabney, Laura, and sometimes Shelley, are seen to operate on two levels. We see them taking part in the wedding itself as Fairchilds. We also see each of them immersed in private consciousness that leaves the rest of the family out. George bathes with Robbie at a family picnic and so

obviously shuts out the others as he displays his private feelings for her that the family turns in embarrassment from what Battle refers to as "The Rape of the Sabines" (74). Dabney goes off on rides and confesses that sometimes she is not simply a Fairchild but a different person, a realization she gratefully was shown by Uncle George. Laura remembers life before her mother's death and decides that although she will remain at Shellmound for a while, when she is able to face the world without her mother, she will return to her father. Shelley, in her anxiety to prove she will be able to face the outside world on her tour, defiantly drives in front of the Yellow Dog in a poor imitation of George's stand against the dangerous reality of the approaching train. All of these things happen on the personal level of consciousness. Although the family may see some action taking place, such as George and Robbie swimming, they mentally as well as physically turn from probing deeper into individual meanings.

To Mr. Hardy this is the legend — a tactful, unstated agreement that while the family is united in love, the members have a right to their separateness as well. The need for happiness is then surface need with an underlying personal right to strife as long as it does not upset the Fairchild tranquillity.

This interesting theory works well in interpreting the

novel with one exception. Mr. Hardy assumes that the legend is tied to a right for inscrutable privacy within the framework of unity by acceptance of an unwritten code. To accept such a code, family members must have some sort of conscious or subconscious awareness of this agreement.

Throughout the book, however, Miss Welty deals with the selfishness of Fairchild love, and their refusal to face reality. It is more probable that the Fairchild failure to see each other's personal problems has to do not with a refusal to invade privacy, but with a simple refusal to admit that Fairchilds can possibly have any identity other than the one they share.

Ellen: the Mother

Ellen is the only character who is shown to have a true sensitivity to the feelings of others. Because she and George understand each other rather well, it is strongly implied that George too shares this insight. While they are both able to see reality, they also tacitly agree that privacy does exist and should be respected.

Ellen, as Battle's wife, is the mistress of Shellmound plantation. She has had eight children, miscarried her ninth, and now is pregnant with her tenth. Although she is greatly occupied with her maternal role, Ellen has managed to maintain a separateness that George would approve of. She loves her husband and children, but they usually see her as a wife and mother and not as Ellen Dabney, the gentle young woman who came to Shellmound over twenty years before.

In wistful moments she admits to Troy Flavin, an outsider from the hill country of Mississippi, that she misses the higher ground in Virginia. She also reminisces about herself as a young girl who loved to read and find symbolic meanings in things. These are some of the thoughts of her private mind that none of the Fairchilds except George really consider.

There are several specific examples of Ellen's private life in the novel itself. One of these concerns a walk she takes in the woods to visit an elderly and ailing plantation Negro. On this walk she encounters a beautiful young girl wandering on Shellmound property on her way to Memphis. Ellen does not prey into the stranger's life, but simply accepts her for what she is, a magnificently beautiful girl. Ellen admits without jealousy that she is much lovelier than the Fairchild daughters — lovely enough for tragedy. At the time she does not realize how prophetic her assessment is, because later the girl dies on the railroad tracks to Memphis.

This meeting in the woods is never revealed to the rest of the family, primarily because it does not concern them. Only George, who also meets the girl, shares the privacy of this incident with his sister-in-law.

The other occurrence that concerns Ellen directly is shared by her niece Laura and involves a garnet pin Battle had given Ellen in their courting days. In a traditional show of Shellmound absent-mindedness, the pin had been periodically misplaced and then found over the years. This time it did not seem to show up, however, and Ellen was concerned enough to ask if it had been seen. The pin is not found until Laura mysteriously comes across it when she and Roy visit Marmion, the plantation where Dabney and

Troy will live.

Laura rejoices in finding the rose-shaped garnet. Just as she has been searching for an appropriate gift for Uncle George so he will love her, she views the pin as a way to gain special favor in Ellen's eyes. Her attempts at special love through gifts or bribes are strangely pathetic in the little girl. She does not realize that, of all people, Ellen and George are most likely to love her simply because of herself.

Unfortunately for Laura, the pin is lost when Roy "baptizes" her in the Yazoo River, and the reader is left to ponder the significance of the trinket. The pin was initially given to Ellen as a love token from Battle, who apparently recognized her appreciation for roses even then. It is a romantic symbol of young love, remnants of which appear and disappear in their life together much as the pin does.

Taking the pin as a romantic love symbol, one must assume that such devotion has not been active in their marriage for some time, and Ellen, when questioned about the pin's whereabouts by Shelley, admits that she is aware that it is missing. This interpretation does not mean that there is something wrong with their marriage. As a broach is a mere adornment, romantic love is not substantial in life. Battle and Ellen have a more comfortable,

mature relationship in the novel. It is pleasant to have a pretty brooch to wear, however, as it is pleasant to have some flattering romance in a marriage, but hardly necessary. In fact, if one pursues the rose symbol, Ellen is seen in her garden at Shellmound surveying the sad condition of her roses and decides she is just too tired to even attempt to prune and care for them; someone else will have to do it. This decision can be tied to the lost-rose-pin symbolism. Weighted down by her responsibilities and the burden of a new child, Ellen can no more pursue romance than she can restore her roses to perfection.

When Roy and Laura find the pin, they recognize it as Ellen's, although they don't know the significance of it in her marriage. Children would also recognize a show of romance such as a kiss, but would not understand why adults act this way. If the pin is interpreted as romance, it is logical that only Battle and not Laura can return it to his marriage. Since he does not find it, circumstances do not allow it to be returned.

The loss of the pin is not necessarily a sad event. Ellen never mentions it after the initial search, and has apparently forgotten about it. She is also quite happy in her role as Battle's wife and the mother of his children, never mentioning a feeling of loss for the romantic love

of their early years of marriage. With the loss of this symbol she sheds the remnants of Ellen Dabney's romantic views and turns to the reality George has made her aware of. He has shown her the value of reality and the importance of appreciating things as they really are. He encourages her to maintain her separateness within the love for her husband and children through the escapes to privacy that are necessary to every human being instead of seeking romance in life.

Despite these personal withdrawals from Fairchild life, Ellen is still receptive to the circumstances going on around her. She worries about Laura because she realizes that the child will soon have to accept the fact of her mother's death. She knows that Shelley is unsure of herself and hopes she will be able to adjust to life despite the added remorse of being an older, unmarried sister at Dabney's wedding.

Ellen's primary concern as a mother, however, is for her daughter Dabney. Because she maintains her daughter's right of choice in her marriage, she never goes even as far as a mother-daughter talk. Instead she remains on the sidelines and apprehensively watches as the wedding approaches.

It is in Ellen's mind that the connection between Dabney's and George's marriage is made: "For Ellen's hope for Dabney, that had to lie in something, some secret nest, lay in George's happiness. He had married 'beneath' him too, in Tempe's unvarying word" (35).

A similar choice of marriage partners is not the only way that Dabney and George are linked in the novel. Dabney herself realizes that she and her uncle are both family favorites although in unequal degrees. "Uncle George they [the aunts] indulged too, but they could never hurt him as they could hurt her — she was a little like him, only far beneath, powerless, a girl" (61). Despite her lesser stature in the family, she becomes his younger, female counterpart in the novel. Like George, she is becoming her own person by freeing herself from doing what the Fairchilds expect and is choosing her own way of life.

Dabney's decision to stand up to the Fairchilds is directly connected to George. She and Troy had become engaged immediately after the excitement of George's near-death on the railroad trestle. She also takes strength in the knowledge that "Uncle George would be on her side [about the marriage]. He would treat it as if it wasn't any side,

which would make it better — make it perfect" (43). She knows that with her uncle supporting her the family will not consider too much dissension if their hero seems to approve the marriage.

Dabney's awareness that George sees things differently did not begin with her decision to marry Troy, but when she was a young child. In her memories of George and Denis she is basically a Fairchild and reacts to George's interference in a Negroes' fight (while Denis walked away) with apprehension for his safety. As she grows older she changes, however, until she confides to herself that sometimes she thinks she is not a Fairchild at all. Later, when Troy also stops a fight between Negroes, her reaction is pride at his courage and convictions.

Although Dabney is showing independence by choosing to marry Troy, she is still very much a Fairchild. Ellen calls it a "selfishness" in her daughter which leads her to be rather self-centered and very happy with her indulged position as a bride. The important thing is, however, that the break with the family that will lead to an eventual grasp of reality is beginning, and Dabney acknowledges that the more independent trend in her life is directly due to George:

> It was actually Uncle George who had shown her that there was another way

> to be — something else.... Uncle George, the youngest of the older ones, who stood in — who was — the very heart of the family, who was like them, looked like them (only by far, she thought, seeing at once his picnic smile, handsomer) — he was different somehow. (45)

Dabney goes on to show through her understanding of George's difference that she is maturing and, although much younger in years than her uncle, she is developing a perception that will follow his lead:

> She had then known something he knew all along, it seemed then — that when you felt, touched, heard, looked at things in the world, and found their fragrances, they themselves made a sort of house within you which filled with life to hold them, filled with knowledge all by itself, and all else, the other ways to know, seemed calculation and tyranny. (45-46)

Dabney shows in these thoughts that she is beginning to see even the simple things in life as they really are and as they relate to her personally. Her perception is not yet mature, however, because, although she is beginning to see reality, she does not understand that there is also danger involved in meeting life head-on without the security devices of ignoring truth. She is marrying Troy, but still views the union romantically.

Ellen, as a more mature version of Dabney, recognizes that marrying Troy carries with it a great number of possible problems. The validity of this apprehension can be seen by looking at George's marriage. Although they love

each other, he and Robbie are still plagued by differences of opinion that arise from their dissimilar backgrounds and philosophies of life. Their love is tempered and made stronger as they surmount each problem, but the liability still remains that someday an insurmountable problem may arise. Knowing this, Ellen says that she

> ... diligently assumed George's happiness, seeing it in the Fairchild aspects of exuberance and satiety: if it was unabashed it was the best part true.... - she could be diligent and still not wholly. She loved George too dearly herself to seek knowledge of him through the family attitude, keen and subtle as that was — just as she loved Dabney too much to see her prospect without its risk, now family deplored, around it, the happiness covered with danger. (36)

She sees for her daughter and namesake the same risk that young Ellen Dabney faced when she had to begin giving up her romantic fondness for stories and symbols to marry Battle Fairchild and face life in the Delta realistically. As Ellen succeeded in this, there is also great optimism for the marriage of her daughter. Dabney already sees Troy realistically, loving him for his faults as well as his virtues. She does not try to make him into a Fairchild, but loves him for himself.

As far as the family displeasure at the marriage is concerned, Dabney knows that she is blood-kin and will be forgiven whatever she does. The Fairchilds will surely

make tender-hearted excuses for her marriage as they do for George and his choice of Robbie Reid. As she matures, Dabney will learn to view this family concern for her as a sign of their love, but this realization will come only with time.

Shelley: the Maid-of-Honor

Shelley also has a slight awareness of the reality and feelings of others, but to an even lesser degree than Dabney. Overtly she seldom expresses feelings, but the reader is allowed to see portions of her diary. She tries to analyze the Fairchilds by writing, "We never wanted to be smart, one by one, but all together we have a wall, we are self-sufficient against people that come up knocking, we are solid to the outside.... I think one by one we're all more lucky than private and more lonely than self-sufficient" (103). Unfortunately, such analysis by Shelley is performed only in the privacy of her mind. Although she is a lonely person throughout the book, she also usually reacts to stress like a Fairchild. When the crisis between George and Robbie is nearing a peak, Shelley stubbornly remains silent about Robbie's whereabouts. She seems to feel that by ignoring the young wife's proximity at her family's store in Fairchilds, she can stop the crisis from culminating — a typical family device of stopping trouble by turning from reality.

In her diary, however, the reader learns more about the oldest sister, who is by far the most secretive member of the family. Her name, which is a diminutive of

Shellmound, fits the quiet girl who has withdrawn so far into her shell that she can express her true feelings only in writing. She embodies separateness to the extreme.

During the course of the novel Shelley is extremely agitated for several reasons. She does not fully approve of her younger sister's marrying first and disapproves even more of Dabney's choice of a husband. These feelings about Troy do not necessarily mean Shelley dislikes him thoroughly, but primarily that he is so different from Dickie Boy Featherstone and the other local swains that she is frightened by him. Her separateness is so great, however, that she can't express these feelings to Dabney, of whom she is very fond. Dabney, in her role as the bride, has become almost a stranger to Shelley, and neither one of the sisters can really assess the other's feelings at this time.

Shelley's excitement and misgivings about the wedding are added to her personal crisis, which is the world tour she is about to take. She is going in the company of Aunt Tempe, a lady capable of protecting her from anything, but Shelley is still worried about leaving the safety of the Delta. In fact, "Shelley doubts there is a real world beyond the trees of Shellmound" (255). Although she is nearly twenty-one years old, her ignorance of life as well as her longing for experience makes her more of a girl

than a woman.

The unsure feelings in Shelley's mind are not really seen by most of the characters in the novel. Ellen, with her mother's perception, sees that her daughter must soon face life and is apprehensive about her ability to do so. It is George, not Battle, Shelley's father, who shares Ellen's concern and understanding of the young girl's problems. Shelley writes in her diary:

> I heard Papa talking about me to Uncle G. without knowing I was running by the library door not to meet T. when he came in (but waiting, I did) and Papa said I was the next one to worry about, I was prissy — priggish Uncle G. said nobody could be born that way, they had to get humiliated. Can you be humiliated without knowing it? I would know it. He said I was not priggish, I only liked to resist. (104)

The thing Shelley seems to be resisting is the challenge of meeting reality. Just as she is forced to meet Troy, she also faces George's opinion of her by waiting outside the room. She is waiting for life to come and sweep her off her feet rather than running to meet life herself. Afraid to take the initiative, Shelley sees the danger of being hurt, of the consequences of things. When George walks the trestle facing the reality of danger, it is Dabney -- not Shelley -- who accepts his challenge. In fact, Shelley is so afraid of reality that she cannot even think of the trestle incident without embarrassment:

> But then came Shelley's own shame in not being able to walk the trestle herself. No one would ever forget that about her, all their lives! (108)

She is ashamed that she is not only too cowardly to face reality, which is symbolized by the train, but cannot even walk the track where life may possibly be.

Shelley's fears that the whole family will always remember her cowardice are born of an over-exaggeration of self. No one but Shelley herself even realized that she was not there with the others. In fact, none of them knows that beneath her haughty superiority of being the oldest sister, lies a fear of life — no one, that is, except George.

With his deep understanding of the Fairchilds, George sees his niece as she really is, and Shelley shrinks before the scruting of his perception. In her diary she writes,

> I think G. expects things to amount to more than you bargain for - and so do I. This scares me in the middle of a dance. Uncle G. scares me a little for knowing my fright.... He expects things to be more than you think, and to mean something — something. He cherishes our weaknesses, because they are just other ways that things are going to come to us. (105)

The reality of her fears is something that Shelley, through these passages, has revealed to the reader and herself. She has found the strength to admit her fears because George has inadvertently challenged her to do so. She knows that

he sees her as she really is, and so she must look at herself this way also. Surprisingly, Shelley does not try to dispel her fears, but maturely accepts them as the reality of her feelings. In this way George has helped her to face life by doing absolutely nothing.

Had he tried to convince her that her fears were groundless, she probably would have stubbornly held to them. By doing nothing, George has forced Shelley to face her own problems, as she must do because only she can solve them.

Her proposed world tour suggests that Shelley is trying to face life on her own. Although chaperoned by Aunt Tempe, she is leaving the Delta for at least a while. Because she has accepted George's challenge to face herself, perhaps she too will mature into a realistic woman, as Dabney probably will be and as Ellen already is.

Laura: the Flower Girl

The final family member examined in some detail is Laura McRaven. Her child's perception of reality is usually more acute than that of the two older cousins. She instinctively knows Uncle George is special and spends most of the novel trying to find a present to give him that is worthy of his family status. She sees that Maureen, the retarded child of the late Uncle Denis, has a dangerous destructive streak in her. She somehow knows that Ellen's lost garnet pin is not merely a piece of jewelry, but of special importance to her aunt. Ironically, in a need for loving and belonging after the premature death of her mother, Laura consciously desires to become a "real little Fairchild" instead of a perceptive person. She is overjoyed at the prospect of being a flower girl thanks to Lady Clare's sudden case of the mumps. Her final decision, however, is to stay at Shellmound only for a while and then return to her rightful place with her father. This is a very strong decision for a child and one that leaves the reader with an optimistic vision of Laura's future. It is as if she knows she should stay at Shellmound and take advantage of the security and love of the family until her emotional wounds from Annie Laurie's death are healed. She can then return to the

reality of her life in Jackson. This action reflects a surprisingly healthy sense of proportion in life. Laura is using her need for love and security only as a protective device for the time being, and not as a permanent escape from reality.

In Delta Wedding Laura is shown as a figure who has managed to bridge two worlds. On the one hand is Shellmound, and on the other is Jackson, where she lived with her parents. Jackson is a world filled with clocks that keep precise time, carefully measuring life in a way that is completely foreign to the Delta. The child remembers that whenever the McRavens returned from Shellmound, "Her father was at the hall clock, ... reaching up to wind it. 'I always like to know what time it is' ... the loud ticks and the hours striking to catch up responded to him ..." (269). It was necessary for McRaven to recapture the hours he had lost on his clock, and Laura, who carried his Northern blood, accepts this. To contrast this awareness of time, however, Mrs. McRaven, a Fairchild by birth, makes Laura a stocking doll names Marmion, which becomes a beloved symbol of the Mississippi plantation. By begging her mother to make Marmion, Laura becomes a divided figure: she is aware of the reality of the present through her father, but is still drawn and tied forever to the Fairchild heritage of Shellmound.

The doll that Annie Laurie made for her daughter that rainy day is loved not only as the last doll her mother ever made, but as a reminder of a perfect day in Laura's mind. The child remembers that she wished for a doll and that her mother made it immediately, even though she was tired from their trip. It was as if Annie Laurie put her last bit of Delta magic into the stocking doll:

> She was excited, smiling, young — as the cousins were always, but as she was not always — for the air at Shellmound was pleasure and excitement, pleasure that did not need to be explained, tears that could go a long time unsilenced, and the air of Jackson was different. (270)

When Annie Laurie returned to the Delta again, it was through death, and she was buried with the Fairchilds. She was never again revitalized and refreshed by the Delta, and somehow Laura knew that her mother had put all the love and joy of her childhood home into the doll named Marmion.

The place for which the doll was named is the plantation where Troy and Dabney will set up housekeeping. The place really belongs to Laura, but in the easy way of the Fairchilds, who trade homes as if they were hats, the newlyweds take possession for the time being. Prior to the wedding, however, Marmion is also the site of an interesting excursion taken by Laura and Roy.

When Laura is taken to the plantation by Roy, she does not realize that it is Marmion she is visiting, since he

refers to the place as "Dabney's house." They enter the house by stepping over a dead mockingbird on the front steps. Laura, remembering the only experience with death in her young life, does not look back because birds lie on their sides in death like people.

Once inside the house, the children are joined by Aunt Studney, an old Negro crone, and the day of exploring becomes an experience with reality through the eyes of the children. According to the Shellmound children, the greatest mystery of their young lives, namely where babies come from, is connected with Aunt Studney's sack. According to Roy, the old Negress brings babies to expecting couples in the burlap bag, although he is slow to admit that he, as well as his brothers and sisters, came from such dubious origins.

Whenever the children see Aunt Studney, they ask to look in her sack, a privilege, Roy says, that everyone, even Battle, is denied. To them the sack must truly hold the secret of life. When in the midst of their exploring, Laura plays an old piano and disturbs a beehive, the children leave the old house not quite sure if the insects came from the piano or the mysterious sack. They have come close to the source of life in their minds, but for their inquisitiveness have received stings. It is not yet time for them to know about reality.

It is as they leave the house that Laura sees the name

"Marmion" on the carriage block, and in what can be interpreted as a sign to her, catches a glimpse of Ellen's garnet pin. She leaves Marmion, the house that is bound so tightly with memories of Annie Laurie through the doll, and immediately sees a broach that belongs to another mother, who, at least for a while, will give Laura the maternal love she so badly needs at this time.

The fact that she never gets to return the pin to Ellen is not important. What is important is that the pin acts as a sign that will lead her to the security of Ellen's care. After the wedding Laura is told that Ellen has arranged for her to stay at Shellmound for the time being, and for Laura the picnic held at the end of the novel is a "... celebration of her reception as a member of the family" (417). For the time being she is safe with Ellen until she returns to Jackson to learn reality from life and not from Aunt Studney!

In a tally of these main characters one can see that two of them - Shelley and Dabney - have only a periodic sense of reality and then revert to the Fairchild bliss of oblivion as far as the outside world is concerned. The third character - Laura - has in her the promise of escaping this Fairchild blindness, but at present is seeking it as a protection against the reality of her mother's death. Finally, there is George, who, as the main character of the

book, is special as the family favorite and also as a perceptive man who loves his family not only as relatives but as individuals.

George and Denis

Although George sometimes seems indifferent, there is no doubt that his love for his family and wife is special. As Shelley writes in her diary, "I think Uncle George takes us one by one. That is love I think. He takes us one by one, but Papa takes us all together and loves us by the bunch, which makes him a more cheerful man" (103). In a flash of perception she realizes that by loving each one for his individual faults and weaknesses George has a more difficult but more personally rewarding esteem for others. He loves them for themselves instead of because of a biological accident that happened to make them relatives.

Though his love for his family is strong, George's love for his wife is a vital force in his life as well. In Fairchild eyes Robbie Reid, a poor shopkeeper's daughter, is totally unfit for their darling George. He had shocked them all by rousing the minister, Mr. Rondo, in the middle of the night and marrying Robbie. As the novel opens, they are again shocked not only by the fact that Robbie had the nerve to leave George, but that George himself even cared!

What they fail to see is that George truly loves and wants Robbie. Failures in perception like this continue

to refute John Hardy's view of a family code respecting separateness. With the few exceptions of perceptive flashes, the family does not <u>see</u> the reality of these inner feelings because of any code or agreement. Because of this blind refusal to accept the separateness of personal feelings as valid, the Fairchilds place George in a besieged position. He must show his wife and family that although he loves them, he also has the right to be an individual, to make decisions, and have private moments. He maintains a critical point that most of the Fairchilds do not understand: Love and Separateness are not necessarily two different things. By standing alone at times, you do not really deny love. Rather, as George knows, if you truly love someone <u>unselfishly</u>, you will understand the need to be separate and grant it willingly. Unfortunately, neither Fairchild love nor Bobbie's love can be called unselfish. Instead, the two forces of love compete with each other, and George is in the middle as the winner's prize. It is in this position that we see George Fairchild as he stands to maintain his Separateness in the face of the demands of their Love.

George's status as the most loved member of the family is his not by choice, but by default. The true possessor of this position was his brother Denis, who had the misfortune of being killed in World War I. Ironically, though

physically dead, Denis is still very much alive in spirit to the Fairchilds, who feel his presence in an almost ridiculous refusal to accept the reality of his death. The spirit of Denis haunts the Delta, and the Fairchilds welcome it gladly. "'These fields and woods are full of Denis, full of Denis, "Aunt Tempe said firmly." If I were to set foot out there by myself, though catch me — I'd meet the spirit of Denis Fairchild first thing, I know it'" (139).

Denis was the oldest of the three Fairchild brothers. Tall, fair, and handsome, he personified the family idea and seemed to naturally accept the pampering ways of his female relatives as his due. Everyone seems to have known Denis and loved Denis until his life becomes a sacred family memory to be examined and cherished.

When he died, the family's need for a favorite to adore could not be satisfied by simply a memory, and, logically, the heir-apparent for this homage would be George since Denis left no son. They unfortunately assume that because the brothers displayed such affection and companionship for each other, they must be alike, a serious misconception.

The only relatively objective picture the reader gets of Denis to test this possible similarity appears when Dabney remembers seeing an episode concerning her uncles as young men. The brothers had been swimming together when they came

upon two Negroes fighting. George, who loves life and any of its creatures, is concerned and involves himself by stopping the fight. Denis is not at all concerned, laughs, and simply leaves the area.

Dabney recalls this incident as an illustration of George's involvement with life in general, and not because of Denis. Therefore, no comment is made upon the elder brother's action except the implication that he behaved like a true Fairchild by ignoring any plight that did not directly involve the family. (The Fairchild in Dabney strongly resented George's being endangered by a fight between outsiders.) It is Denis' action, not George's that would be applauded by the family.

The only decisive thing the reader knows that Denis did without family approval was to marry. The circumstances surrounding his union with Virgie Lee are completely ignored, as are the details of Maureen's birth. One must assume, however, that the Fairchilds resented Virgie Lee as they now resent Robbie Reid. Denis' widow is seen as a tangle-haired undesirable by the family, but her reaction to them is even more revealing of what the Fairchild treatment of Denis' bride had apparently been. When seen by the cousins on a trip to town, Virgie Lee says, '"Go away! Go away! Don't tamper with me! Go home to your wedding and palaver'" (274). Her aversion to even the youngest Fairchilds raises

many unanswered questions in the reader's mind: why had Virgie Lee relinquished her child to the family? How did she react to Denis' death? Was there any special reason for Maureen's retardation? One can only surmise that she left Shellmound because she could not live there. The Fairchilds probably considered her no more fit for Denis than Robbie is thought to be worthy of George. The birth of a retarded child would probably fortify this opinion since the family would surely assume that Maureen's weakness came from her mother rather than from her perfect father, and Virgie Lee's present behavior would verify this view.

The Fairchilds assume that Virgie Lee's refusal to cut or comb her hair is an expression of insane grief over Denis' death rather than a possible act of defiant refusal to act or appear as the Fairchilds would expect her to. Instead, she wears common makeup and walks "...the way no lady would..." (274). She wants nothing to do with the Fairchilds or their way of life. The family, of course, would not accept such a possibility because they cannot imagine the reality of anyone's consciously rejecting them. Instead, they prefer to think she is insane with grief.

Surprisingly, the presence of an odd wife and a retarded child does not dim what is called "...the pure, unvarying glory of Denis..." (79). John Hardy asserts that because Denis is dead, he is now beyond reproach.[24]

The family has reclaimed him from his wife and is free to distort his memory in any way necessary to make him measure up to their marvelous image of perfection. If he had lived, there is a possibility that he would have refused to sacrifice his ideas for family love, although his lifelong behavior makes it a remote chance. In any event, his untimely death makes any such thought only a conjecture. Instead he remains the shining example that the Fairchilds expect George to strive for whether he wants to or not.

Explanations for Miss Welty's vague treatment of Denis can be found. By failing to examine the man, his life, and his marriage distinctly, she makes it easier for him to assume the stature of a legend. He becomes larger than life, and this image of him is not diminished by a careful recounting of the normal aspects of his experiences. Instead, the hazy aura surrounding his marriage and even his death allows the family and reader alike to read their own thoughts into Denis' story.

Virgie Lee's strange actions suggest that there is some reason for her becoming the kind of woman she is rather than a serious, mourning widow with a retarded child to raise. Would Denis have married her if a mental weakness had been discernible? Did Denis cause her breakdown? Did the Fairchilds and their ways disturb her so much? All of these questions come to mind and remain unanswered, suggest-

ing that, although the Fairchilds carefully avoid the realities and unpleasantness of life, these things do exist, and as closeby as the wife and child of their hero.

John Hardy makes some interesting comments on Denis and his family in the Sewanee Review. He views him not only as a dead family hero but also as a symbol of the past, an area that encompasses the old days of the present family and the old, romantic days of the South itself. Denis is like the typical dead Civil War hero brought up in time to World War I. Hardy extends his death to forecast the death of the Old South that will threaten Shellmound as the reality of the present draws nearer. Denis' family, consisting of the knotted-haired wife and a retarded daughter, suggests that the Old South is not only dead but can no longer cause or reproduce anything fine and perfect except in romantic memories.[25]

Although this symbolism is understandable and can be verified, it still remains doubtful that Miss Welty created Denis to stand for the Old South. Ruth Vande Kieft writes that Eudora Welty chose 1923 as the date for the novel because nothing was happening that year. The writer could then write a Delta story without having her characters distorted by reactions to exterior crises in the world.[26] John Crowe Ransom has criticized the novel for the very reason that it is so isolated and the position of Delta in

relation to the South as a whole is not examined. He sees Delta Wedding as a portrait of a doomed way of life rather than a commentary on the true situation of the area.[27]

The solution to the view Miss Welty desired for Denis must be connected to her overall approach to the novel. Was Delta Wedding written as a symbolic comment on Southern life or as a personal presentation of people, their lives and emotions? Although a case can be made for the former interpretation, it is secondary to the strength of the latter. Too much emphasis is placed on the human aspects of the Fairchilds to allow us to write off the novel as a symbolic comment. While Denis can be seen as a representative of the glorious Old South through the minds of his family, he is first a man who served his family's needs for a favorite. What the cost of this position was to Denis himself is not known because of his early death. One can only look at what he left behind: shining memories, a probably insane wife, and a retarded child, to evaluate his effectiveness. The memories are glorious, but the reality of his little family is sad.

Maureen Fairchild, Denis' daughter, is the most distinct part of her father's life shown in the novel. She is nine, the same age as India and Laura. Although always present and accepted by the family, Maureen's true personality is never shown. She has a habit of ending her

words with "la," and says "choo-choo!" in constant reminder of her starring role in the trestle incident. Otherwise, the only comment on Maureen is made by India, who says she is harmful. By "harmful" India refers to pranks such as pushing firewood on Laura during a game of Hide and Seek. The true harm she causes is not so overt, however. The real danger resulted because Maureen gets her foot caught in a railroad tie on the trestle in what is the most important incident in the book. The significance of its being Maureen's foot that is caught is twofold. Any of the other cousins would be used to walking the trestle and capable of dislodging a caught foot. Maureen is so busy waving at the train that she does not even try to get loose. Because of her retardation, she does not realize that she is in a dangerous position, and the shouts of the others do nothing to make her understand the peril.

George, her would-be rescuer, is a great person for letting others solve their own dilemmas <u>if they are capable of doing so</u>. Since Maureen obviously is not, he faces the train with her.

The second way of viewing Maureen is not as a trapped, retarded girl, but as Denis' daughter. This is not to say that George helps Maureen because of Denis; he would help any child incapable of helping himself. It cannot be denied, however, that Denis, simply by dying, placed George in his

present family status. Because of his daughter's dangerous situation, he also puts George in a position to show his defiance of life and danger by taking a stand on the trestle with the trapped child. In one startling incident George shows that he can and will face danger despite family pleas to preserve himself to fulfill their selfish needs for a hero.

The Challenge on the Trestle

The trestle incident itself has already occurred when the book opens, and the family is busy coping with the results of that day. It was immediately after the Yellow Dog missed killing George and Maureen that Dabney and Troy went up on the trestle and got engaged. It was also at this time that Robbie Reid Fairchild, screaming, "'George Fairchild, you didn't do this for me!'" (77), decided to leave her husband. Tired of competing with the family love, and exasperated beyond endurance that George would risk his life to save a Fairchild without even checking on her own safety, Robbie temporarily gives up.

To the family George's actions on the trestle are endearingly foolhardy, and also glowingly heroic. Aunt Tempe makes his stand almost sacred by saying that he saved Maureen for Denis' sake. No one considers that George stayed to help Maureen as he would have helped any child who could not cope with the danger — because he wanted to.

The trestle incident is told over and over again by assorted cousins and referred to by others. In essence the basic story is that George and Robbie, accompanied by some family Negroes and the cousins, went on a picnic. On the way home they took a shortcut by walking the railroad

tracks across the trestle, where Maureen's foot got caught. When the local train, the Yellow Dog, appeared, everyone jumped off the low trestle except George, who stayed behind to help Maureen. The train managed to stop on the trestle at the same instant that George and Maureen pulled free.

There are only two significant variations in this story. India, when repeating the story for the minister, Mr. Rondo, mentions that she was singing a song that went: I'll measure my love to show you, I'll measure my love to show you — " (75) during the incident. This may be true or simply the type of embellishment India is wont to add, knowing Robbie's reaction to the whole situation.

The second variation, which is revealed to the reader through Shelley's diary, is one that the family would never repeat. George did not actually save Maureen by freeing her as the hero-worshippers delighted in thinking. Instead, he was unable to free her. Maureen, fighting him to wave at the train, caused him to lose his balance, and the weight of his body, falling from the trestle, pulled the girl's foot loose. Shelley is the only one who knows this rather anti-climatic fact because all the others were busy saving themselves from the train by jumping. Only Shelley, who had been afraid to go on the trestle at all, is in a position to see the entire incident.

The fact that George did not really free Maureen is

not important. Even if Shelley revealed what really happened, the Fairchilds would undoubtedly prefer the most romantic version of what happened. What is important is that George did stand on the trestle and prove himself to be a man worthy of interest if not the momentary glory with which the Fairchilds view him.

The significance of the trestle incident has been mulled over by Fairchilds and readers as well. Ruth Vande Kieft says that "George's act of heroic abandonment on the track is both a protective action an invitation to experience, or a similar abandonment to all his young viewers (significantly, the adults are not along). He is showing them all clearly that danger <u>is</u> involved in living a full, courageous life he himself embodies, and unconsciously challenges them to share."[28]

The challenge this critic refers to is apparently taken to heart by some of the cousins. George's act gives Dabney the courage to admit her love for Troy and marry him despite the disapproval she knows it will cause. Shelley tries her own challenge later when she drives her car in front of the train. Her act of defiance is an empty one, but at least she <u>tried</u> — an optimistic sign that she will try to face her personal challenges when she leaves Shellmound. In these ways George's action was not empty heroism, but a catalystic force.

Robbie Reid does not perceive this, however, and sees George's stand not as heroic, but "conceited." She says George felt the Yellow Dog would stop, not daring to hit them, and George's answer reveals his opinion on the trestle incident:

> "The Dog didn't hit us," George said.... "I don't think it matters what <u>happens</u> to a person or what comes." ....
> "You didn't think it mattered what happened to Maureen?"
> "To <u>me</u>. I speak for myself." .... Something is always coming. You know that." .... "I'm damned if I wasn't going to stand on that track if I wanted to! Or will again." (217-218)

Using Ruth Vande Kieft's interpretation of the Yellow Dog as a symbol of experience or life. George's answer indirectly states a credo in his personal existence: he is not going to avoid experiences in life simply because they may hurt him. He is going to "stand on the track" and face the world, and Robbie, if she is to share his life, had better realize this. Also included in this answer is the fact that George is facing the danger for only himself and does not even attempt to make this decision for anyone else. He helps Maureen only because she is not capable of helping herself as the others are.

It is additionally significant that George does not force any of the young cousins to face the reality of the Yellow Dog with him. Instead, he allows them to observe

his actions and then go on, <u>if they wish</u>, to face their own challenges. In this way George shows not only that he loves them, but also that he values their right to the separateness he demands for himself.

Robbie: George's Bride

Separateness within a love relationship is something that George's wife cannot understand. Being married to George Fairchild was beyong the wildest dreams of young Robbie Reid, a clerk in the Fairchilds' General Store. When her dream came true, Robbie pledged to love him with a devotion that would never end. She has kept this promise. Her life centers around George, and she unfortunately expects the same response from him. This feeling, however, is impossible for George. He is the center of his own world and, although he loves her, Robbie must be content with being a satellite.

Robbie, not understanding his views on life, decides that the way to get him to love her more is to be as much like the Fairchilds as she possibly can. She furnishes their apartment in Memphis in the same style that Aunt Tempe favors. She tries in every way to fit into the mold of George's female relatives. But try as she will, she can never succeed. At first it seems that as a contemporary of Shelley she is too young to cope with the situation, but age has nothing to do with it. Robbie can never be a Fairchild because they will not let her.

When Robbie returns to George at Shellmound and meets the family instead of her husband, she is exhausted enough

to drop all pretenses and speak her feelings about the Fairchild women. Many of her opinions are distorted by her own despair but serve to give the reader a picture of Robbie as well as of the Fairchild women. As she cries out her agony, one cannot but wonder if Virgie Lee once felt this way too.

Being basically the type of person who gives rather than receives, Robbie sees the grasping love of the Fairchilds with a mixture of horror and despair. To her they are all alike, hiding behind the general look of the Fairchilds, present in even the tiniest babies. Most of all, however, she sees it in the Fairchild women. They are the ones who ask the most of George in return for the little gifts and special deserts they press on him.

> And of course those women know what to ask of their men. Adoration, first - but least. Then small sacrifice by small sacrifice, the little pieces of the whole body. (172)

In this passage Robbie sees the aunts, sisters, and nieces feeding on George in a sort of cannibalism of love. Each one wants a special part of George's esteem and affection. They vie with each other and, to Robbie, each wears the same Fairchild look on her face:

> In Robbie's eyes all the Fairchild women indeed wore a mask. The mask was a pleading mask, a kind more false than a mask of giving and generosity, for they had already got

> it all — everything that could be given — all solicitude and manly care. (173)

Feeling that she must protect him from these women, Robbie returns to the plantation to find George.

When she arrives at Shellmound, she is treated coldly by everyone but Ellen. The Fairchild women still will not accept her even though she has done a sort of penance in the long walk from town to be reunited with George. The reason for this Fairchild attitude really has nothing to do with Robbie personally. In fact, it is such an unusual lack in her background that it seems almost ridiculous at first. It is simply stated that "There was no land among the Reids" (186). In the Delta land is the mark of family gentility. There is no real resentment that Robbie's ancestors were laborers and socially beneath the Fairchilds. Poor behavior can be excused if you owned land, but the Reids did not.

This is of primary importance to the Fairchild women because "in the Delta the land belonged to the women — they only let the men have it, and sometimes they tried to take it back and give it to someone else" (171). Robbie has come into a family that is a strong matriarchy, and she lacks not only land but also the philosophy of life that agrees with the Fairchilds'. In the family" ... the women always ruled the roast; Robbie believed in her soul that

men should rule the roast" (170). Perhaps it is his recognition of this belief that attracts George to Robbie. tired of fighting off the clinging female love of his family, he has found a girl who feels she should follow his lead in life. It may be that the very drawbacks that the family sees in Robbie are the attractions George appreciates. He does not want a wife who will try to control him. He doesn't care if she has no land because he wants to take care of her, not have her care for him.

The problems in their marriage are not based on a fight for mastery in their marriage; Robbie deeply believes that this role belongs to the husband. What she must learn is that by giving him the controlling role she must learn to fully accept his decisions. In return he will treat her not with tyranny but with real consideration and gratitude for her understanding of the things he must do to fulfill himself.

This type of agreement on marriage roles is a strong demand for any woman, especially for a young girl like Robbie. The positive factor in this situation is, however, that of all the women in the book Robbie is most able to accept such a situation. Because she does not believe in the Fairchild matriarchy, she is better able to accept George's terms. In return for his separateness George will want Robbie to remain her own woman; he does not want

to dominate her. He wants her to stand beside him in life, touching, but still separate. The acceptance of this understanding in their marriage is the adjustment that Pobbie and George are making.

The family watches this adjustment being made and, of course, does not understand it at all. They cannot understand that the struggle the young couple is going through is strengthening, not weakening, their marriage.

Although the Fairchilds find it unbelievable in this marriage, there is an attraction that is both physical and emotional between Robbie and George which is best seen on an early family picnic. While swimming, he had partially undressed her in the water in a show of sensuous affection which Ellen described as "Dalliance, pure play, George was after that night — he was enchanted with his wife, he made it plain then" (35). The family reacted by chiding Robbie, saying that George could not swim well because of a wound he had sustained in the war, an apparently idle excuse to cover up their desire to stop any future displays of affection between their hero and the wife the relatives find unsuitable. (The wound of the war they speak of is more likely the death of Denis, which has forced the family honor on George, than an actual physical wound!)

Despite George's apparent devotion to Robbie, he also proves that his fidelity is secondary to his desire for

individuality. During his estrangement from Robbie, George meets a girl in the Shellmound woods and simply makes love to her, although he does not know her, and their relationship goes no further than the physical act. George recounts his experience to Ellen, who assumes it was the honest reaction of a man to a lovely girl.[29] That George made love to the girl because he wanted to may also be interpreted as a show of independence. By taking a stand against the confining love of his marriage (as he took a stand against the Yellow Dog). George chances more trouble with his wife. Although Robbie never finds out about the girl in the woods, George must know what her reaction would be. By making love to a stranger at such a delicate time in his marriage, George is inviting disaster as he invited it on the trestle.

The incident on the trestle is further tied to the young girl when the family is told that she was killed by the Memphis train while walking the track. Of course, only Ellen and George realize it is the same woman. This death may be used to elevate the whole episode in the woods to a symbolic level. It is as if the girl becomes a sacrifice to the train for George: she dies in his place. The two symbols of reality and experience, the train and the girl, meet while George is allowed to escape and live.

The emotional impact of the girl's death on George is

not strong. He is busy being reunited with his wife and pays little if any attention. While the actual wedding of Troy and Dabney is going on in the background, George and Robbie are settling their differences in what is the true wedding of the book.[30] The wedding imagery for the latter couple is carried further when Shelley finds one of Robbie's shoes in the upstairs hall as if George had carried her over the threshold, indicating that their reunion was also consummated.

The reunion itself has been achieved on George's terms. He has not deceived Robbie by letting her believe that he will in any way change his life. He restates his devotion to her, but maintains his right to separateness. She has accepted this, but is still fiercely protective of him. She is content to simply be near him rather than part of him, and does not want the Fairchilds to be any closer than she is.

> She drew her breath in fiercely as always when the fond, teasing, wistful play of the family cove for George hung and threatened near. Nothing was worthy of him, but the pure gold, a love that could be simply beside him - her love. Only she could hold him against that grasp, that separating thrust of Fairchild love that would go on and on persuading him, comparing him, begging him, crowing over him, slighting him, conforting him, deceiving him, confessing and yielding to him, tormenting him -

> those smiling and not really mysterious ways of the Fairchilds. (175)

Because Robbie now decides that she is content to "be simply beside him" with her love, she must have been greatly affected by her estrangement from George. She has grown and matured through this trying experience. At last George has been able to convey some of his philosophy to her, and she plans to see that it is not violated — especially by the Fairchilds. Actually, in the Fairchilds Robbie is fighting an enemy that does not exist as far as George is concerned. Though he is aware of the demanding love of his family, he refuses to be dominated by it. Robbie's real competition is her husband himself.

Despite the position of prestige George occupies in the family and the novel in general, Miss Welty does not present him as any larger than life. Instead, George is seen struggling to be simply a man with a right to self-determination, not a hero. To achieve this view of George, she uses his sister-in-law, Ellen, the mistress of Shellmound, whose perception is the only objective picture we are given.

The Internal Fight

A Virginian by birth, Ellen is not a real Fairchild and apparently has never tried to be, a fact that has won her the title of being "snooty" from Aunt Tempe. By virtue of her ten pregnancies, however, she is as close as an outsider can get to the family without actually belonging. Her proximity allows her the advantage of intimacy with the family without the disadvantage of Fairchild point of view. It is for this reason that George goes to Ellen with the problem of his estrangement from his wife. He must know that from Ellen he will get honest understanding and sympathy, while from the family he will get shrieks of protective dismay and a piece of somebody's special cake.

From this point on Ellen seriously begins "George watching" and musing about the man who is her husband's brother. Primarily through her thoughts, and occasional observations by Dabney, Shelley, or Laura, the reader learns the story of George's life.

George is one of three Fairchild brothers. Denis, the oldest, was lost in the war and Battle, the second brother, has apparently been "appointed" to provide children for the family — a duty he has certainly taken seriously! George is left as the youngest son, the family darling, to

be loved, caressed and clucked over by the women of the family. In return he is to flatter, adore, and protect his aunts and sisters as they expect him to do.

Yet somehow, from the beginning George was different. Physically," ...George, though he was not himself fat, was markedly bigger and fairer than any of them in the early portraits, as if he were not a throwback to type (...) but a new original — a sport of the tree itself (33). He is also mentioned as being the only Fairchild who remained left-handed, a trait that all the others were broken of. Even young Laura, seeing George, knows that he is different and it is right for him to stand apart from the rest of the family.

If fate had not played the trick of Denis' death, George probably would have been allowed to develop freely these unique qualities Miss Welty hints at. But Denis did die, and the Fairchilds are trying to make George, who is the most individual member, into the prototype of the family hero. He reacts to their plan with understanding, but a quiet, gentle refusal to conform.

Ellen calls this resistance to the family demands "an internal fight." She tries to explain it to Robbie when the younger woman returns to Shellmound:

> "There is a fight and its come between us, Robbie," said Ellen, her voice calm and a little automatic.... There's a

> fight in us, already, I believe — in people on this earth, not between us, and there is a fight in Georgie too. It's part of being alive....
>
> "If there's a fight in George, I think when he loves me he really hates you — hates the Fairchilds that he's one of!"
>
> "But the fight in you is over things, not over people," Ellen said gently. "Things like truth, and what you owe people...." (191)

In this exchange it is revealed that although Robbie still feels the competition of Fairchild love, Ellen sees clearly what George is doing. The combination of "truth, and what you owe people" comes close to the problem George faces. How much of his own life can he sacrifice to the demands of a loving family, to aunts who raised him when his parents died, to a devoted wife? George faces a sort of guilt for not giving in to people who love him so much. This guilt fights with the reality of what George wants for himself. As Ellen says, the fight is not with him, but within him.

After her reconciliation with her husband, Robbie begins to have at least a limited understanding of what Ellen was trying to say. She sees that the family is besieging George for "little pieces" of his integrity, and that he resists when she thinks,

> There was enough sweetness in him to make him cherish the whole world, but in himself there had been no forfeiture. Not yet. He had not yielded up to that family what they really wanted. Or they would not keep after him. (248)

This insight would seem to denote an optimistic understanding on Robbie's part. It is spoiled, however, by her next statement that she still feels a competitiveness with the Fairchilds rather than with George himself: "But where she had expected light, all was still too" (248), an indication that Robbie still thinks that if the Fairchilds lose, she will win. She does not really understand the idea of an internal fight at all.

Robbie's use of the terms "light" and "dark" suggests the lamp imagery that is prevalent throughout Delta Wedding. Tied to the important symbol of a nightlight, this theme of internal struggle illuminating a person's being is carefully drawn. Eudora Welty brings the idea of a nightlight from her own childhood and explains it in Three Papers on Fiction:

> Some of us grew up with the china nightlight — the little lamp whose lighting showed its secret and with that spread enchantment. The outside is painted with a scene, which is one thing; then, when the light is lighted through the porcelain sides a new picture comes out through the old and they're seen as one. A lamp I know of was a view of London till it was lit, but then it was the Great Fire of London, and you could go beautifully to sleep by it. The lamp alight is the combination of internal and external, glowing at the imagination as one; and so is the good novel. Seeing that these inner and outer surfaces do lie so close together

> and so implicit in each other, the wonder is that human life so often separates them, or appears to, ...[31]

It is this nightlight of the Great London Fire that she incorporates into Delta Wedding.

The actual lamp is given to Dabney as a wedding gift from her aunts at the Grove. They present it to her as a family relic, a symbol of the nostalgia with which they view the past. Dabney breaks the lamp with no real feelings of remorse — much to India's horror—and George, when told that the nightlight was broken, laughs saying that Dabney will never miss it.

His reaction is typical of a realistic man who has no need for antiques that serve to keep a romantic image alive and Dabney, whose independent life is beginning with her marriage, is also able to view the loss of the light as an accident rather than a tragedy. Because it is broken, the lamp becomes important to the novel only through its symbolic meaning.

J. A. Bryant, in his study of Eudora Welty's fiction, feels the light is not only a familiar sight to the Fairchilds, but a symbol of life in the family. It suggests a "transformation" that comes over them when they are extremely happy or upset, changing their appearances.[32] In times of stress we see them illuminated by agitation or joy.

John Hardy interprets the lamp differently, using it as a combination of protection and disaster. These two themes do play an important part in the novel. George is seen as not only facing but often inviting disaster, and as a family protector keeping danger from the Fairchilds by challenging it himself. Mr. Hardy says these two themes are "...inextricably bound up together from the first, in the family legend as in the design of the lamp and its shade, and their unity is unbreakable."[33] He does not carry the imagery through, however, telling which theme illuminates the other, or how they change the complexion of the whole.

Both critics in their interpretations have ignored the clues given in the text itself. Surprisingly, it is Robbie Reid who carries much of the lamp imagery in her speech. In the following quotation she gives two ways of seeing the light:

> The Fairchilds were always seeing him [George] by a gusty lamp of their own indulgence. While she saw him lighted by his own fire — no one else but himself was there, a solid man, going through the world, a husband. (222)

The first view given about the Fairchilds is interesting. The gusty lamp suggests an irregular fire, blown perhaps by the winds of a storm. Fairchild love is like this — sometimes tender, sometimes chiding, but seldom consistent.

The second idea, that of an internal fire, is even stronger. The Fairchild light seems external, and serves only to illuminate George from the outside, while the light by which Robbie sees him comes from within George himself. This latter idea seems more in keeping with the description of the lamp. While Robbie's perspective of an internal light is adequate, her interpretation is still in keeping with her view of George. She sees him as "a man going through the world, a husband," not as the complete being George is trying to be.

As Miss Welty leads the reader to be reluctant to see Robbie's views as completely objective, so she has given validity to Ellen's perception. Returning to the sister-in-law's sight of George, one sees that Ellen feels there is a fight within each person. Using this struggle as the internal, illuminating force, the lamp imagery can be adapted. When the fight in George flares, it transforms him a quiet man to one who does otherwise inexplicable things like standing on a trestle facing danger. The tranquil man is illuminated by the audacity of his act as quiet London is transformed by the fire.

Ellen not only sees that there is such an internal fight in George, but also understands it. The author speaks in Delta Wedding, saying, "Ellen sees the internal fight as a condition of life itself, and so necessarily George

struggles as he tries to live honorably and independently as well as lovingly, as he tries to reconcile his various loyalties and to resist what is merely possessive in the Fairchilds or his wife" (101). In this way George is fighting for his honor as a man — a loving man who must be separate as well.

Love and Separateness:

Ellen and George

George seems to know that Ellen understands his plight in life. Throughout the novel they meet on various levels of understanding until finally on the night of Dabney's wedding Ellen and George, in the midst of a crowded reception, are seen in a sort of spotlight of self-revelation. Ellen, clumsy and exhausted by the celebration and her advanced pregnancy, wearily looks at her brother-in-law and is suddenly allowed a glimpse into his mind:

> It was inevitable that George, with his mind, should stand on the trestle — on the track where people could indeed be killed.... He was capable — taking no more prerogative than a kind of grace, no more than an ordinary responsibility - of meeting a fate whose dealing out to him he could not contest; ... And she saw how it followed, the darker instinct of a woman was satisfied that he was capable of the same type of love.... She was his friend and loved him. But starting now..., and without regret for her life with Battle, she might have been the one. (257-259)

In this act of perception Miss Welty, through Ellen, has voiced the one question suggested often to the reader, but never openly expressed — why wasn't it Ellen and George who married? The answer to this question is so obvious that even while reading the novel, which is filled with connections between the two, one has a tendency to dismiss such thoughts.

Ellen is pregnant, her body filled with Battle's child. She is already a mother to almost too many Fairchilds. Even though her own mother once ran away to England for true love, Ellen would not — could not — do so.

Despite these reasons, Miss Welty has not only planted the suggestion in the reader's mind, but has had Ellen express it as well. The answer lies in the fact that there has been a third wedding on this day. Ellen and George, through the illumination of perception, have been given an unencumbered view of each other that seldom occurs in a lifetime. This view is a "marriage of minds." They will each go on living their individual lives with Robbie and Battle respectively, but they will also have that closeness of knowing that if only for an instant they met on the high plane of complete understanding.

It is of critical importance that Ellen's thought "she might have been the one" is preceded by "without regret for her life with Battle." She is not for one moment considering changing her life any more than George would dream of leaving Robbie. The love George and Ellen have found is not on the level of husbands, wives, children, or any such things. It is a true love of the highest order; however, it is a love that allows separateness.

John Hardy states that "This is where Miss Welty is at her best, and where one has to start looking for the

'meaning' of the novel, in the one particularity of the moment, the single illuminating, still act of private perception."[34] By using this technique, Eudora Welty has not only given Ellen and George a special moment; she has extended it to the reader as well. Throughout Delta Wedding she has presented Ellen and Battle with the tender comfort of a long and basically happy marriage. They see each other with a gentle love that does not have to be demonstrated. On the other hand, she presents George and Robbie in a new and tumultuous love. Theirs is a young marriage still full of the adjustments every couple must make. Both are good marriages of people the reader becomes fond of.

While Miss Welty directs the reader's eyes to not only the situations of these two unions but the new marriage of Dabney and Troy, as well, she indirectly plants suggestion after suggestion that George and Ellen are forming an unusual type of union. With expertise she manages to do this without the word "infidelity" even being considered. George and Ellen's mental union has nothing to do with their actual marriages. It does not mean they love their mates any less; their understanding and love for each other are "separate."

In this one single act of perception Miss Welty reveals to the reader the ideal combination of Love and Separateness. It is a common esteem two people have for each other without any selfish demands. Ellen sees and loves George for what

he is and for the challenge his separateness gives her for her own life. As she thinks,

> Only George left the world she knew as pure — in spite of his fierce energies, even heresies — as he found it; still real, still bad, still fleeting and mysterious and hopelessly alluring to her [Ellen]. (99)

As he challenged his young observers by his stand on the trestle, he has challenged Ellen to follow her particular destiny. George has shown her that he too possesses a deep and universal love for life that does not deny loving other people, whether wife or family, but it does not focus on them either. He has a love for the world itself and each thing in it. He wants to experience being a son, a brother, a husband, and even a father because that is a part of life - but only a part. This is where Robbie's love and Fairchild love fail: they want him to be content with only a part of life. It is Ellen's unselfish esteem that happily gives him the individuality of Miss Welty's theme of Love and Separateness in George Fairchild's need to function as a man.

Afterward

At the end of Delta Wedding Miss Welty gathers her cast of characters together in a pastoral picnic scene for a final curtain call in this "comedy of love." They are joined in the languid assurance of love, completely comfortable, before the pace of their separate lives begins again.

Robbie and George are reunited and happy until the next danger of misunderstanding. Dabney and Troy are filled with the knowledge of each other and eager to start their life together as man and wife rather than bride and groom. Ellen and Battle proudly survey their family and look forward to the new child that India somehow wisely knows will be another little brother who will carry a great burden: the name Denis Fairchild. The old aunts have been reassured that the rats at the Grove will be dealt with, and the children have accepted Laura as one of them.

In this final scene Miss Welty does not show the Fairchilds resisting the demands of love to gain separateness in their lives. Instead, with one tranquil picture she shows the other side of the coin, while love can be selfish, it can also give the happy well-being the family enjoys at the end of the novel. There is no need to prove or

assert this type of love; it is simply accepted. The Fairchilds are seen in the Delta, the home they all love, enjoying the companionship of their family, the only other people in the world who can truly understand what Shellmound means.

The family lies comfortably, filled with food and well-being, thinking about life. Troy does not look so out of place, and even Robbie Reid is thinking about what it would be like to live in the Delta like Mary Shannon, the first Fairchild bride, and raise a family. George talks about changing crops in an only half-serious way, and his sisters, at first flustered by his words, reassure each other that he is only teasing. Change is threatening, but they do not yet have to take it seriously.

Miss Welty's reasons for ending her novel with a picture of the family together are revealing. She has filled her book with instances of individuals fighting this very love to maintain separateness, and yet the most contented picture of the Fairchilds is given when, at least for a short time, separateness is forgotten.

Although this may seem contradictory to her purpose at first glance, a more careful consideration reveals that Eudora Welty has always maintained that success in life begins with "Place," the locale where one has his roots and is free to be himself. It is at this point that we

see the Fairchilds at the end of the novel. Literally lying on the ground of the Delta, they are secure in the land where the family roots are. For the time being the demands of love are still, asking nothing. For this charmed evening the Fairchilds are happy in the Delta where it all began.

And then, as if to show that God and the heavens approved their happiness, a star falls — and then another.

Footnotes

[1] Atlantic Monthly, 177, (January 1946), 113.

[2] Isaac Rosenfeld, "Double Standard," New Republic, 114:17, (April 29, 1946). 634.

[3] Diana Trilling, "Fiction in Review," Nation, 162:19, (May 11, 1946), 578.

[4] John Crowe Ransom, "Delta Fiction," Kenyon Review, VIII, (Summer 1946), 507.

[5] Alan Jones, "The World of Love: the Fiction of Eudora Welty," The Creative Present, Nona Balakian and Charles Simmons, eds., (Garden City, New York 1963), 181.

[6] Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "The Golden Apples of the Sun," The Faraway Country; Writers of the Modern South, (Seattle 1963), 134.

[7] Eudora Welty, "Must the Novelist Crusade?" Atlantic Monthly, 216, (October 1965), 106.

[8] John E. Hardy, "Delta Wedding as Region and Symbol," Sewanee Review, LX, (Summer 1952), 397.

[9] Ibid., 406-407.

[10] Ransom, 505.

[11] Eudora Welty, "A Still Moment," Selected Stories of Eudora Welty, (New York 1954), 93.

[12] Robert Penn Warren, "Love and Separateness in Eudora Welty," Selected Essays, (New York 1941), 156-169.

[13] Eudora Welty, Delta Wedding, (New York 1945), 16. (Pagination parenthetically included in the text hereafter.)

[14] Ransom, 504.

[15] Alfred Appel, Jr., "The Season of Dreams and the Natchez Trace," A Season of Dreams, (Baton Rouge 1965), 203.

[16] Eudora Welty, "Place in Fiction," Three Papers on Fiction, (Northampton, Massachusetts 1962), 15.

[17] Hardy, 401.

[18] Thomas H. Carter, "Rhetoric and Southern Landscapes," Accent, XV, (Autumn 1955), 293.

[19] Eudora Welty, "How I Write," Virginia Quarterly Review, 31, (Spring 1955), 242.

[20] Ruth Vande Kieft, Eudora Welty, (New York 1962),107.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Hardy, 404.

[23] Ibid., 410.

[24] Ibid., 407

[25] Ibid.

[26] Vande Kieft, 109.

[27] Ransom, 507.

[28] Vande Kieft, 107.

[29] Hardy, 408.

[30] J. A. Bryant, Jr., Eudora Welty, University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 66, (University of Minnesota 1968), 23.

[31] Welty, Three Papers on Fiction, 4.

[32] Bryant, 24.

[33] Hardy, 416.

[34] Ibid., 404.

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